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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Well, the first of two weeks of vacation is just about history. It's been a relaxing week, starting off with a loud and busy 4th of July long weekend. We had our third annual block party that went quite well. For a change, it wasn't your typical hot and humid day.

We managed to get a number of our home projects done this week, but like most homeowners, that list is never completed! There's always something to do around here. And if there weren't, my wife would find something!

Short work weeks usually make for quieter than usual news weeks as well. However, I did want to make a few comments that pertain to a couple of the headlines that made the news this week. These are opinions that have made these pages numerous times in the past, but I'm going to repeat them again nonetheless. First off, there's another campaign picking up steam again that is trying to come down on violent video games. The opinion, once again, is that violent video games have a harmful effect on kids. Bull. As I've said in the past, these are simply games - pure fantasy. They are not real. Here's another method of politicians and conservative groups trying to take action on something that parents should be doing. You don't like violent video games, don't buy them. Your kids are playing them anyway, get rid of the games! Be a responsible parent!

The other hot issue of the day is the recent ruling by the Supreme Court stating that the COPA (Child Online Protection Act) ruling violates the 1st Amendment - that of free speech. So in effect, adult-oriented material on the internet is protected. This issue is a double-edged sword. I certainly understand the desire to protect children from online predators. But I also understand the need to protect the right of free speech. This is another case in which the parents need to take a tough stance and educate their children, and to monitor what they do while online. One of the first things parents teach their children - once they're old enough to stay outside by themselves - is not to talk to strangers. Why can't this lesson be copied when your children are online? Yes, it's a little more difficult, but not if your lesson was learned well. If you don't know who is on the other side of that computer screen, ignore them! Down off my soap boxes.

Until next time...

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## STIDEM Prototype

A new project to upgrade an Atari ST is now on debugging phase. This card will include flash ram (to install new TOS rom for example), DRAM upgrade, IDE buses for HD and CDROM, PS/2 for mouse and keyboard.

http://stlabs.free.fr/

## GamebaseST v0.2

Rob Perry  has announced:

GamebaseST v0.2 is a database of 230 Atari ST games, including screenshots, manuals, hints, cheats etc, and it also doubles as a front-end for STeem and SainT emulators.

The Gamebase front-end (www.bu22.com) is gaining more and more popularity with emulator users as it can support almost all emulators running on the Windows platform.  It already has a 15000+ game database for the C64 platform, and other databases include Spectrum, Super NES and Amiga.

The Atari ST version boasts the best support for the built-in GEMUS scripting language so far, enabling the database to launch STeem automatically with optimum settings for each game (TOS/memory/harddisk/joystick/midi etc).  Now most of the hard work is done preparing the database, the GBST team can now STeem (ahem) ahead to reach the 1000 game target which will signify the v1.0 release.

An ST Demo version of the database is also in the making (DemobaseST)

http://www.gamebasest.com/

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## PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and I find myself in the same situation as Dana... ON VACATION!

Of course, as is usually the case, it hasn’t been like a vacation at all. I’ve ended up cleaning up a lot of loose ends that have needed taking care of for a while, and even cleaning up a lot of OTHER PEOPLES’ loose ends too.

I must be getting old, because I can remember back to a time when

’vacation’ actually meant ’to get away and do something or go somewhere for recreational purposes that you normally wouldn’t do or go to. Sounds simple, doesn’t it?

So here I sit, halfway through my vacation, wondering (first) where the week went, and (second) what little surprises the coming week will have in store for me. I have no doubt but that the coming week will be worse, since my wife (affectionately known as "The Ball and Chain") will also be on vacation. And although I’ve finally broken her of writing out those Honey-Do lists, I’m sure she’ll have an armful of projects that "we" want to get done. Oh well, such is life, I guess.

On another note, there are still a couple of people out there who still cannot grasp the idea of my not coming right out and stating my political affiliation or my preferences. A couple of people have sought out ’hints’ about my preferences from things that I’ve said, and come to conclusions on that basis. In general their accuracy has been little better than if they had flipped a coin.

I’ve always seen voting as a personal thing. Somewhere out there, there is probably a candidate that fits your philosophy to at least some extent. I’ve never felt that you should have to justify your choice.... unless your choice is one of opposition instead of one of support. Opposition to one candidate or philosophy is not the same... or as good as... support of one. It’s easy to oppose something or someone. There’s no trick to it, and in general I find support by opposition to be the lowest of all possible motivations. It’s not... or it shouldn’t be... what we’re about. Being against something is not the same as being for the opposite of it. There are plenty of choices out there..... take one and make it your own.

I may go into my opinions and positions just before the election, but my purpose isn’t really to get you to vote my way... it’s just to get you to vote.

(Yep, here it comes... you just KNEW it was coming, didn’t you?) Voting is probably the most important thing the average american can do. Being a child of the 60’s, it amuses me to realize that we get a chance to overthrow the government every four years. There are some very jaded people out there who say that all the choices amount to the same thing and that there’s really no difference between candidates. Well, in the final analysis that may be true. But we’re no where near the final analysis, so get your butt out there and register to vote so that you can, if not make a difference, at least voice your opinion or preference. If you don’t, you’ve got no standing to complain, and I’ll end up telling you to sit down and shut your pie-hole for the next four years. So get out there and let your voice be heard. Viva la revolucion! <grin>

Okay, let’s get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

## From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Joshua Kaijankoski asks about motherboard revisions for the Falcon030:

"What revisions of Falcon motherboards were produced?

I’ve come across A, B, D/C but I’ve heard of pre-production motherboards and revisions 1-4. What are their differences?

Is a revision A motherboard with TOS 4.01 worth acquiring or is it too crappy?

The best Falcon I’ve ever owned was an MKII Falcon with what I assume would be one of the latest batches of motherboards.

The most incompatible and problematic motherboard for me has been a revision B with TOS 4.02. I have not owned a Rev. A so I’m assuming it’s even worse... right?

For those who want to check their revision number, look on the bottom left corner of the motherboard. There’s a sticker there with the number/letter."

Rodolphe Czuba tells Joshua:

"Rev A, B, C, D/C, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L,
Rev A, B & C (second layout)

ARE ALL GOOD !!

All the mb are identical layout (there are 2 different layouts) with all identical CHIPS!
The revisions re really minor like the sound level of the internal speaker by example..."

Brian Roland asks about what’s needed to write a TOS program:

"Yes, I’m interested in learning enough bits to do the following....

1. A tos only telnet client for STiK/STing that can be run under the console/emulation of choice. I.E. run inside the CoNnect terminal via CoSHY, TOSWIN, GENEVAWIN, or directly from a console or vconsole.

2. At some point, I’d like to do a really nice TosWin type application that can run without MiNT, and has speedy vt102 emulation or better with full extended ansi color. Included in this terminal emulation package might be drop down menus and or hotkeys where one could call tos apps with optional preset command lines. I.E. You’re working over a telnet connection, and wish to set a block of text and run a spell check....you might have a tos based dictionary, that you can call quickly and easily with your drop-down menu...that’s smart enough to launch the dictionary, and cat all this selected text into it.

3. To possibly port some unix/MiNT-Net clients and servers to run with STiK/STing.

4. To make a MiNT-Net driver for the Dynaport SCSI/Link ethernet device.

5. Possibly a protocol/driver to send and receive TCP/IP over SCSI in a way tha
t
can be integrated into the networking route.tab of MiNT, MagiC-Net, STing, and STiK. Kinda like PLIP, only MUCH faster! If SMIDI is possible, and apps that support it such as ZeroX do nicely in most if not all of the TOS environments, then why not a SCSI based TCP/IP stack?

If these things already exist somewhere....please let me know!  Been searching for over a decade now  ;)

If not.....
I'm not sure where to even begin!  I.E. what language would be best?  What do I need to find and study first in order to accomplish these goals?

I have here a Falcon CT2b with EasyMiNT installed.  A Mega ST4, STacy 4, and a Windows XP box.

The only programming tools I have are whatever is with MiNT, and a really ancient version of Mark Williams C...who's shell won't even run on the Falcon! MWC does still have the huge lexicon with it, but the functions listed in it all look greek to me.  I can understand there might be a lot of hours of making simple, "Input: "What is your name?" type test apps to learn about and accumulate a workable library......but I'm not even sure where to start.  Tips, experiences, and encouragement are all welcome."

So far, only one person has replied, and that was to Brian's item number four:

"Roger at Anodyne (ExtenDOS author) had started on this.  You should perhaps contact him on that (a MiNT-Net driver for the Dynaport SCSI/Link ethernet device)."

Well folks, unfortunately, that's it for this week. The number of messages in the NewsGroup have been disturbingly low, but that always happens at this time of the year. I hope your July Fourth celebration was happy, healthy, and above all, safe.

Tune in again next week and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section  - Lawmakers Go After Violent Games!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Debating Effects of Violent Games!
                                    'Oddworld Stranger'!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   -  The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

# Lawmakers Attack Violent Video Games

The video game industry seems to delight in pushing the envelope - and the bounds of good taste - with ever-gorier content. That has put it under renewed attack from legislators and activists who claim some titles must be kept out of kids' hands, though courts have repeatedly granted games First Amendment protections.

The opponents cite new research that they say suggests strong links between violent games and aggressive behavior. They are disturbed by games' cultural ubiquity and the always-improving technology that makes virtual gore more realistic than ever.

"Pediatricians and psychologists have been warning us that violent video games are harmful to children," said Mary Lou Dickerson, a Democratic legislator in Washington state who wrote a law now being challenged in federal court - banning the sale of some violent games to kids. "I'm optimistic that the courts will heed their warnings."

Lawmakers in at least seven states proposed bills during the most recent legislative session that would restrict the sale of games, part of a wave that began when the 1999 Columbine High School shootings sparked an outcry over games and violence. None of the measures that passed have survived legal challenge.

The game industry says legislating ultra-violent games out of the hands of children would deal a severe blow to free speech. Game companies point to the industry-imposed ratings system that gives detailed descriptions of violence in a game and labels some titles as "mature" or "adults only."

"Does it make any rational sense to you that we're going to pass a law someplace that says we're not going to prevent minors from buying 'Passion of the Christ' or 'Kill Bill' or 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' in a local store but you can't buy 'Resident Evil?'" said Douglas Lowenstein, president of the Entertainment Software Association, referring to three violent movies and a popular horror-action game.

The debate reflects a divide in the way people perceive games. Are games harmless, perhaps even cathartic, as many people who grew up playing them believe? Or are they teaching kids to be more aggressive, and in extreme cases, to kill?

To game opponents - many of whom admit they don't play video games - it's the latter. They point to new studies that purport to show a stronger link between violent games and aggressive behavior than ever.

"On average, there is a significant tendency for the studies to yield an increase in aggression by those who have played the violent games," said Craig Anderson, an Iowa State University professor and leading researcher on the effects of media violence.

There is also the inescapable fact that the military uses video games to train its soldiers. A 2003 University of Rochester study found that young adults who played a lot of fast-paced video games showed better visual skills than those who did not.

Author Evan Wright ponders the effects of video games on U.S. soldiers in the current Iraq war in his new book "Generation Kill." In an endorsement

that "Grand Theft Auto" creator Rockstar Games would probably rather not get, he quotes one U.S. soldier as saying an ambush felt just like playing the game.

"It felt like I was living it when I seen the flames coming out of windows, the blown-up car in the street, guys crawling around shooting at us," the soldier says.

The next 12 months could see a flurry of new scrutiny of violent games because three controversial franchises are due to release sequels. They include "Doom," notorious as a favorite of the Columbine killers; "Mortal Kombat," with its calls for a player to "finish" opponents in myriad gruesome ways; and "Grand Theft Auto," which exhorted players in its latest iteration to start a Cuban-Haitian race war.

Meanwhile, we're in the midst of a gaming explosion. Deloitte & Touche predicts the worldwide number of "game compliant devices" other than PCs - mobile phones, consoles, and handheld computers, for example - will see a six-fold rise by 2010, from 415 million now to 2.6 billion.

For some legislators, that's a call to arms. Some want the violence in some games declared obscene.

"You can carve out some exceptions to the First Amendment when it is determined that these things we are talking about - like pornography, like alcohol, like tobacco, and so on - have harmful effects to children," Leland Yee, a Democrat in the California Assembly.

Past efforts have failed, often because of challenges from the Entertainment Software Association.

A St. Louis County law that would have limited children's access to video games was rejected in the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. A bill by Yee that sought to restrict the sale of games died in committee.

Nationally, proposed legislation by Rep. Joe Baca, D-Calif., would penalize retailers who rent or sell games with violent, sexual or other "harmful" content to minors. A version was killed in 2002 but a revised draft is making its way through the Judiciary Committee, with 43 co-sponsors.

Among games' most vocal critics is Jack Thompson, a Florida lawyer who has tried, so far without success, to argue for acquittal of defendants in violent crime cases in which he believed that games made them do it.

"There's a culpability here that should be shared by those who are training kids to kill," Thompson said.

Thompson is part of a $246 million case filed last year that accuses Rockstar Games, Sony Entertainment and other companies of causing two teenage stepbrothers to shoot and kill a motorist, and wound another, in Tennessee last year. The boys, who pleaded guilty to reckless homicide, reckless endangerment and aggravated assault, told authorities they were inspired by the "Grand Theft Auto" series; Thompson and another lawyer are suing on behalf of the victims.

Game makers have been largely silent on the issue. Rockstar and several major publishers refused to comment.

Still, the notion that games should be restricted is accepted elsewhere. New Zealand, Brazil, Germany and several other nations have outlawed some

games.

In Britain, the makers of the "Resident Evil" series were made to change the color of blood from red to green, while the creators of "Carmageddon" had to make the people you run over in your car look more like zombies than average pedestrians.

Game makers counter that parents are responsible for the games kids play - and need to understand that games aren't just for kids anymore. Some evidence also exists that kids don't particularly seek out violent games and don't have unfettered access to them.

The National Institute for Media and the Family, a critic of violent games, reports that 79 percent of stores it surveys prohibit selling mature-rated games to kids. Many major chains - including Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Best Buy Co. and Electronics Boutique of America Inc. - will have a carding policy in effect by the end of 2004, though the titles are available over the Internet.

"Grand Theft Auto: Vice City," the best-selling game of 2002, was the only mature-rated game among the top 10 for 2003, according to NPD Fungroup, at No. 6.

"Vice City" trailed the top title, "Madden NFL 2004," as well as two Pokemon games and "The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker," a Nintendo Co. tale featuring a kid in a green outfit who travels by talking boat and pals around with an excitable fairy named Tingle.

And the most popular computer game of all time is Electronic Arts Inc.'s "The Sims," in which the player is virtually incapable of committing any act of violence whatsoever.

American McGee, who in 2000 made the last mature-rated game for Electronic Arts, "American McGee's Alice," said game publishers try not to get engaged in the debate over whether violent games cause violent behavior.

"They look at how hypocritical our society is when it comes to judging the content or sexuality in the media," McGee said. "And they look at how these double standards or triple standards are applied to films versus games or music versus games or written fiction versus games, and it's a silly argument to get involved in."

## Experts Debate Effects of Violent Games

It's hard to find clear answers in the debate between the makers of video games and activists who claim the electronic diversions are destroying an entire generation.

One side claims there is no evidence that games have any damaging psychological effect on the people who play them. The other says the link between game-playing and aggression is as strong as the link between cigarettes and cancer.

A 2001 report by the surgeon general wasn't much help: While noting that media violence had a small effect on physical aggression and a moderate impact on "aggressive thinking," it concluded by saying, "The impact of video games on violent behavior remains to be determined."

When defending games, the industry often cites a 2000 Washington State Department of Health study that found "research evidence is not supportive of a major public concern that violent video games lead to real-life violence."

Another 2000 report in the Applied Developmental Psychology journal found that "the overall picture that emerges from the present pattern of findings is that computer game play is one manifestation of an active and well-adjusted lifestyle."

Gaming opponents, however, have sources of their own.

A 2000 report from six health care organizations, including the American Medical, Pediatric, and Psychiatric associations, said preliminary studies on the effects of violent games "indicate that the negative impact may be significantly more severe than that wrought by television, movies, or music."

Research by Craig Anderson, an Iowa State University professor frequently asked to file supportive briefs on behalf of legislators trying to restrict the sale of games, generally goes further than other studies in showing a strong link between game aggression and violence.

Anderson frequently measures aggression by the pushing of a button or aggressive play. Game advocates question how that can be equated with real world violence.

One of the main overall weaknesses with research in this field is that it generally deals with older games, so the effects of technological advancement and more mature games released since about 2000 have yet to be seen.

And even the researchers who find evidence that violent games can lead to bad behavior will not say how games rank among a host of other so-called "risk factors" like poverty, abuse or neglect.

"Media violence is only one of many factors that contribute to societal violence," Anderson has written, "and is certainly not the most important one."

## EA Set to Unleash Oddworld Stranger

Electronic Arts announced that Oddworld Stranger, the latest in the internationally acclaimed character-based Oddworld series, will bring its signature brand of action gaming to owners of the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system and Xbox video game system from Microsoft. Oddworld Stranger, which is currently under development for a planned spring 2005 debut, will be published and distributed by EA under the EA GAMES brand.

Developed by Oddworld Inhabitants, Oddworld Stranger features detailed interactive environments set in an enthralling new frontier of the Oddworld universe. Players step into the role of the Stranger, a rough and tumble bounty hunter who tracks down outlaws for moolah. Using a special weapons system that gives a whole new meaning to "live" ammo, players will encounter deviant species and hostile challenges along the way. Oddworld Stranger combines first and third-person gameplay with familiar Oddworld

elements and an all-new engine to deliver a unique gameplay experience. Set to award-winning visuals, players will be moved by the complex and inspiring story as the Stranger comes to grips with his true nature in the hunt for the ultimate bounty.

Since its debut, the Oddworld series has become one of the most popular game franchises of all time with nearly five million units sold worldwide, garnering more than 100 industry awards and gracing the cover of more than 50 magazines. The three previously released chapters, Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee, Abe's Exoddus and Munch's Oddysee have been heralded as revolutionary for their mix of brilliant graphical artistry, unique personality and compelling gameplay.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

## Parties to Allow Bloggers to Cover Conventions for First Time

More than 15,000 people will converge on Boston later this month to cover the Democratic National Convention - including, for the first time, bloggers.

The Democratic Party plans to give media credentials to a select group of bloggers who want to cover the event, where Sen. John F. Kerry (Mass.) is expected to accept his party's presidential nomination. The group has not announced which bloggers might get the passes, but that information will come in the "next few weeks," an event spokeswoman said. The convention begins July 26.

But officials said whoever gets credentials will have the same opportunities to cover the four-day event that journalists enjoy. "We want to treat them just the same as other reporters," said Mike Liddell, the convention's director of online communications. "We're even planning to do a breakfast for them the first day of the convention."

The Republican Party recently decided that it will also give bloggers credentials for its convention later this summer. A spokesman for the event said it is still working out details.

The Web sites, which are essentially online journals, have become a prominent campaign tool this election season - ever since former Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean's official blog caught on. Since then, scores of other candidates have developed similar sites. Some candidates have begun advertising on other independent blogs - especially sites that feature commentaries, usually partisan, on the political news of the day.

But neither party has ever allowed bloggers to cover one of its presidential conventions firsthand - and the decision seems to promise a clash of two very different cultures. The conventions have become carefully staged productions intended, primarily, to reintroduce the parties'

nominees to the general public. Independent blogs - especially those focusing on politics - are far more freewheeling, their authors mixing fact with opinion and under no obligation to be either fair or accurate.

Joe Trippi, former campaign manager for Dean’s campaign, said he supports the decision but that it presents some risk to the Democrats. He said many bloggers are more liberal than Kerry - and may feel free to vent their frustration with the candidate if, for example, he presents himself at the convention as a centrist.

"They’re much tougher, I think, from an ideological bent than mainstream press," Trippi said. "You’re not going to take any flak from the mainstream press for tacking to the center on a given issue."

But he and other Democrats said the plan also gives the party a chance to reach a larger audience. Although television networks have cut back on their coverage of the conventions - saying they yield little news - some bloggers have attracted sizable audiences. Lina Garcia, a spokeswoman for the convention, said she hopes the bloggers will help the party reach young people. "A lot of young people blog now, and they’re important to us," she said.

Markos Moulitsas Zuniga, a Berkeley, Calif.-based lawyer who runs one of the most popular liberal blogs - Dailykos.com - predicted that many bloggers will beam a reliably pro-Democratic message back to their readers. "We’re all partisan. We don’t pretend to be otherwise and would not be constrained by bounds of having to balance out what we write with the other side," he said. "So it’s a much more direct way to get out the party’s message to its constituents and potential constituents."

It is not clear how the Democratic Party will decide among the more than 60 bloggers who have applied for credentials. Convention officials said they are considering three criteria: the size of the blogger’s audience, the "professionalism" of the site and the amount of original material it includes. It is subjective and a little vague. But then again, Liddell said, no one has tried this before. "We don’t have a guide to go by," he said.

## Bagle Virus Code Released

The Bagle virus has emerged yet again - this time with a new twist that could cause even more headaches for the vast Windows community.

Two new variants of the mass-mailing worm emerged during the holiday weekend, along with the virus source code, in what appears to be an effort to create even more versions of the menace.

The latest variants, known as "Beagle.y" and "Beagle.z" or "Bagle.ad" and "Bagle.ae," depending upon the security firm, proliferate through large-scale e-mailings, as did previous Bagle versions. This worm, which first appeared in January, is particularly nasty because of its ability to spread rapidly.

Beyond e-mail traffic, Bagle also spreads through peer-to-peer file sharing networks, such as Kazaa, BearShare or LimeWire. Once inside a PC, it searches for any e-mail address it can find, including those on databases, Web pages and configuration files.

The most noteworthy aspect of the latest variants is their ability to deliver copies of the source code along with copies of themselves, said Joe Telafici, director of operations for security provider McAfee Avert. "The effect is that this makes it much easier to modify the code and create new variants," he told NewsFactor.

Creating an open-source virus also may help the author cover his tracks by making it harder to pinpoint the source of the infection, he added.

Oliver Friedrichs, senior manager for Symantec security response, agreed that offering the source code provides the basic building blocks for others to use in launching additional variants of the worm.

"Attackers have shared source codes among themselves and put them on Web sites, but delivering the code with the virus is unusual," he told NewsFactor.

Symantec today listed the risk assessment of this threat as "medium," and Friedrichs said the number of customers reporting infections has dwindled in the past 24 hours.

As always, PC users are reminded to use a personal firewall, update their antivirus software and ignore unsolicited e-mail.

## Lovgate Worm Comes Back to Life

A new variant of the Lovgate worm has been discovered infecting PCs globally, according to security bulletins by major security firms including Symantec and McAfee.

First discovered in February 2003, the Lovgate worm spreads by e-mailing itself to addresses found on infected PCs. Once inside a machine, the worm opens a "back door" to allow an attacker inside. In addition, Lovgate scans PCs for executables and replaces them with further copies of itself.

Considered a medium risk by both Symantec and McAfee, the new Lovgate variants - Lovgate.AE and Lovgate.AH - target Microsoft’s Windows applications and will disable antivirus software and security applications on an infected system.

"What this worm does... is it responds automatically to e-mail sent and attaches itself in the reply," explains Jeffrey Posluns, chief innovation officer at Toronto-based IT security provider WhiteHat. "It is a much more likely mechanism to have the recipient of the e-mail open the attachment. The inherent paranoia usually related to attachments is diminished because it is a reply to an e-mail sent."

Despite being dormant for nearly a year, Posluns says it isn’t surprising to see viruses like Lovgate rear their ugly heads again. In fact, he says there are several ways and incentives for virus writers to re-infect systems with the same viruses. In the case of Lovgate, the source code is already written.

"That is the hard part," he says. "Virus writers can make modifications but the code is already done so they save on time."

He also notes that while no firm or user should be without antivirus software, it’s not the be all and end all of a secure system. Posluns likens the newest strain of Lovgate to the Hepatitis disease and vaccine: a "shot" for Hepatitis A won’t protect against Hepatitis B or C.

"Most virus writers will modify the virus just enough so that antivirus definitions will not be able to pick them up," he says.

As a rule of thumb, Posluns says e-mail administrators should configure systems to delete executables as soon as they pass through the e-mail server. WhiteHat, for example, has developed Insight Antispam and Antivirus, an offering that does just that.

Insight works in tandem with antivirus definitions like Symantec’s Norton and McAfee to decrease the amount of real threats that make it through to the employee desktop. During trials in the month of June, Posluns says that out of 101 million e-mails received, the Insight product was able to determine and delete 70 million messages as spam and 21 million as harboring viruses. He says that while no viruses made it through to end users, 32 were picked up by antivirus definition software.

## Supreme Court: First Amendment Covers Online Porn

The Supreme Court has ruled that the Child Online Protection Act, passed during the Clinton Administration, violates the First Amendment because it would restrict the free-speech rights of adults to see and buy porn over the Internet.

Although it never has been enforced - since it was challenged from the onset in one court venue or another - the law mandated that operators of commercial sex sites verify that customers are 18 years or older.

Justice Anthony Kennedy, writing for the majority, suggested filters might be a partial answer to the problem of protecting children from unsavory material. Filters are "less restrictive" and thus pose less risk of muzzling free speech, he said. "They impose selective restrictions on speech at the receiving end, not universal restrictions at the source."

Those who sought to strike down the law noted its reach went far beyond what was intended. The types of speech at issue include sexual advice columns, discussion boards on gynecology, and Web sites for a bookstore, an art gallery and the Philadelphia Gay News, among others, says Ann Beeson, litigation director of the ACLU’s Technology and Liberty Program.

This law is just the latest challenge to the First Amendment, which protects adults’ rights to view indecent material; in this instance it addressed the Internet medium instead of the corner bookstore. But, as welcome as the ruling was to freedom of speech advocates, it did strike a nerve. It underscores, once again, the danger the Internet poses to children: through child pornography and also through the access the Internet provides pedophiles to potential victims.

Not that law enforcement has ignored the problem; recently, just to name one example, a new international initiative was formed to coordinate the monitoring of certain chat rooms by police from the U.S., the UK and Australia.

Increasingly, though, Internet providers and other private-sector participants are taking stronger stances against the most dangerous elements of the Internet.

BT, for example, recently barred its Internet customers from visiting child-porn Web sites. Also, P2P United - a representative group of various exchanges - has been active in working to curtail such activities. And last year, Microsoft closed its free MSN chat rooms in Europe, Asia and Latin America in part for this reason.

## U.N. Aims to Bring Spam ’Epidemic’ to End

The United Nations is aiming to bring a "modern day epidemic" of junk e-mail under control within two years by standardizing legislation to make it easier to prosecute offenders, a leading expert said Tuesday.

"(We have) an epidemic on our hands that we need to learn how to control," Robert Horton, the acting chief of the Australian communications authority, told reporters. "International cooperation is the ultimate goal."

The International Telecommunications Union is hosting a meeting on spam in Geneva this week that brings together regulators from 60 countries as well as various international organizations, including the Council of Europe and the World Trade Organization.

The U.N. agency said it would put forward examples of anti-spam legislation which countries can adopt to make cross-border cooperation easier. Many states currently have no anti-spamming laws in place, making it difficult to prosecute the international phenomenon.

Top priority is "pornographic material ... that may come to the attention of children," said Horton, who is running the meeting. "I think it’s time we did something formally about this. We will have to come to some sort of general understanding."

As much as 85 percent of all e-mail may be categorized as spam, the ITU said, compared to an estimated 35 percent just one year ago. The vast majority is generated by a few hundred people, but authorities are not able to prosecute many of them under current legislation.

Spam and anti-spam protection cost computer users some $25 billion last year, according to the United Nations.

Now the problem is rapidly spreading to cell phones. Nine of every 10 spam messages in Japan are now directed to mobile phones as text messages, Horton said.

Spamming is also being used to perpetrate criminal acts. One technique - known as "phishing" - involves sending e-mails that appear to be genuine correspondence from reputable companies. Recipients are asked for their bank details to clear up a mistake and then money is bled from their accounts.

## Court Throws Out Microsoft Win on Keyboard Patents

A federal appellate court on Tuesday said a lower court erred in invalidating two patents for ergonomic computer keyboards, dealing a blow to Microsoft Corp., which fought to have them voided after being sued by the holder of those patents.

TypeRight Keyboard Corp. sued Microsoft in July 1998, claiming that Microsoft’s ergonomic keyboards, which split the keys into separate clusters for the left and right hands and have a large wrist-rest, violated its "’441" and "’484" patents.

In June 2000, after Microsoft presented a document from a German company, Marquardt GmbH, that it said proved the concept of such a keyboard predated TypeRight’s patent applications, a federal court in southern California granted a Microsoft motion to invalidate the patents.

But the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, D.C., said on Tuesday there was a "genuine issue" with the credibility of Microsoft’s witnesses and that the judge should not have invalidated the patents given those issues.

"While this is a close case, we conclude that summary judgment of invalidity was improperly granted and that a trial is necessary to determine whether the testimony offered by Microsoft to prove that the Marquardt document was prior art is credible," the court wrote.

However, the appellate court refused to consider whether the lower court improperly denied another Microsoft motion, for a summary judgment that its keyboards did not infringe the TypeRight patents, saying it lacked jurisdiction.

"We hope that they’re open to settlement of the case, a fair settlement that is," said Matthew Herron of Meisenheimer Herron & Steele, attorney for TypeRight. "If not we’re prepared to try the case."

But Microsoft insisted it would still prevail.

"We continue to believe the patents in question are invalid. The evidence will also ultimately show that there was no infringement of any kind, and our ergonomic keyboard technology was developed by our own engineers based on pre-existing Microsoft technology," the company said in a statement.

## Googles Getting Tough with Google

Googles, the rights owner of four-eyed aliens Oogle, Iggle, Oggle and GooRoo, has filed legal action against Internet-firm Google for breach of its trademark.

Darnestown, Maryland-based Stelor Productions, which has the exclusive worldwide rights to the Googles mark and characters, is opposed to a trademark application by Google for goods and services for children. Google’s application includes books, stickers and clothing, as well as e-mail services and a search engine. Googles also has filed a petition to cancel an existing registration for the Google mark for e-mail and search engine services for children.

In both proceedings, Googles has asserted that consumers are, and will

continue to be, confused, about the use of the search engine's Google mark for goods and services targeted for children. "Its mark is confusingly similar to ours," says Steven A. Esrig, CEO of Stelor Productions.

In deciding to file the actions, Esrig cited the increasing harm Google has caused to his children-focused business.

Stelor Productions says that since its startup, Googles has worked to develop story lines around its "Googles from Goo" alien characters, games, music recordings and other elements to expand its Web presence. It also has developed stickers, CDs, plush toys and other items to promote its Web site and generate income. Recently, it launched several Googles-themed children's songs on iTunes.

The original creator of the Googles from Goo characters received trademark rights in 1997. Stelor acquired the characters, along with trademark rights, in 2002. Google registered its trademark in 1998, and the trademark was approved by the Patent and Trademark Office in 2004.

"Even though Google is bigger, better capitalized and more widely known, the company can't continue to pretend we don't exist," says Esrig. "We were first in this trademarked space, and Google has no right to seriously damage our brand and our business. That's what trademark law and intellectual-property rights are all about."

Googles is on the brink of substantial business development, says Esrig, but the publicity surrounding the pending Google IPO and Google's move into children's goods and services has deterred investors, licensees and entertainment partners from completing their transactions with Stelor Productions.

"In other words, Googles has been stopped cold by Google," says Esrig.

## Alleged Hacker Now Works for Microsoft

A man accused of hacking into search engine company AltaVista's computer systems about two years ago is now employed by Microsoft Corp., reportedly working on search technology.

Laurent Chavet, 29, was arrested by FBI agents a week ago in Redmond, Wash., acting on a warrant issued in San Francisco.

Federal prosecutors allege that Chavet hacked into AltaVista's computer system to obtain software blueprints called source code and recklessly caused damage to AltaVista's computers.

Microsoft spokeswoman Tami Begasse said Friday that Chavet, who lives in suburban Kirkland, is an employee of Microsoft. She declined further comment on the nature of Chavet's employment or when he started at the company, citing Microsoft policy on not discussing personnel matters.

Generally speaking, Begasse said: "We're confident in our policies and procedures we have in place to protect our code and to ensure that employees do not bring third party code into the work place."

A woman who answered the phone at Chavet's house Friday said he would have no comment.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, citing anonymous sources, reported that Chavet had been working on Microsoft's MSN Search effort.

In a research paper on search technology published in IBM Systems Journal, Chavet is listed as a search expert who works at Microsoft and was previously with AltaVista.

In 2003, AltaVista, based in Sunnyvale, Calif., was acquired by search company Overture Services, Inc., which in turn was acquired by Yahoo Inc. later that year. Microsoft's MSN Web site currently uses both Overture's and Yahoo's search technology.

But the Redmond company has begun an aggressive effort to develop its own search technology as it tries to compete with search engine leaders Google Inc. and Yahoo. Microsoft, which has acknowledged it lags in search, hopes to play catch-up with a broad-based search tool that allows users to also scour through e-mails, documents and even big databases.

Court documents say Chavet worked at AltaVista from approximately June 1999 to February 2002. Beginning in late March 2002, the U.S. attorney's office alleges in court documents, Chavet began accessing AltaVista's computers without permission, causing about $5,000 in damage over a one-year period.

A spokeswoman for Overture declined to comment on Chavet's case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Chris Sonderby, who is in charge of the California unit that is prosecuting the case, told The Associated Press that the allegations against Chavet "do not pertain to Microsoft."

Chavet was released on a $10,000 bond and is expected to make a court appearance July 20 in San Francisco. Both charges carry a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a $250,000 fine.

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